

Political Activities by At-Will State Employees

The following guidelines shall apply to actions by such at-will state employees appointed by the Governor:

- While on state time, no employee may engage in any political activity.
- No state resources (funds, vehicles, computers, fax machines, other equipment, etc.) may be used for political purposes.
- No employee may be forced to engage in any political activity as a condition of employment.
- No employee shall be rewarded or discriminated against in any way for participating or not participating in any political activities.

While there is a bright line against engaging in political activities on state time or with state resources, there are no legal limitations on your political activities outside of the office. If you wish to participate in a political activity during regular work hours, you must use personal leave.

- Employees may work on campaigns, donate money, attend campaign events (including fundraisers), place a sign in the yard, put a bumper sticker on the car, and engage in many other political activities.
- Employees may belong to and hold office in political committees and organizations.
- Employees may express their opinions as private citizens and are encouraged to vote.
- If you plan to become visibly involved in a campaign (host fundraiser, attend press conference, etc.), you must notify the Chief of Staff in advance of the activity.

State executive branch employees who are principally employed in connection with programs financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal agency may be covered by the federal Hatch Act. State employees covered by the Hatch Act may not be candidates for office in a partisan election. However, they may actively campaign for candidates for public office in partisan and nonpartisan elections and may contribute money to political organizations and attend political fundraising functions.

As always, the key is to use your best judgment and do not engage in any activity which will reflect negatively on the Governor.

Real-Life Issues

Q. I am going to Northern Virginia for a policy meeting and to give a dinner speech – all official state business – and I am driving a state car. Can I also stop by a fundraiser that same evening for a political candidate?

A. No. A state vehicle should not be used as a means to attend any political event, however indirectly.

Q. How about if I am driving my own car?

A. Yes. As long as you have legitimate state business to conduct as the reason for the trip, you are not prohibited from attending a political event on your own time. You may only seek reimbursement for the mileage directly attributable to the official public business. If the political event were a luncheon during the business day, you would have to take personal leave time to attend the luncheon.

Q. May I use my title on a fundraising invitation?

A. No. You may lend your name to an invitation with prior notification to the Chief of Staff, but the invitation should not use your title or give any indication that you are participating in an official capacity.

Q. May I endorse a particular candidate? Attend a press conference with the candidate?

A. Yes, with the prior notification to the Chief of Staff. On the reverse side, though, remember that you are under no obligation to endorse or give money to any political candidate.